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15 JAN 1960

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director (Support)

SUBJECT : CIA's Language Program

REFERENCE : Memo from DTR to DD/S,  
16 October 1959, Same Subject

1. Last October I wrote you that OTR had launched a comprehensive review of the Agency's Language Development Program. I indicated at that time the general course the review was taking and some of the tentative conclusions that were emerging. This memorandum reports the status of the review and recommends in paragraph 3 the actions which I believe should be taken at this time to modify the language program.

2. STATUS OF OTR'S REVIEW OF LANGUAGE PROGRAM

Since my report of 16 October, the following have been and are being accomplished:

a. Memos have gone to the three Deputy Directors explaining the nature and purpose of our current review of the language program, telling of plans to speed up proficiency testing, and requesting their help in surveying language requirements throughout the Agency. DD/P has responded by furnishing the results of a rather incomplete language survey made two years ago, together with certain other information, which it says ought to suffice for our present purposes. DD/I and DD/S are making more complete surveys and results should be in hand very soon.

b. Substantial progress is being made in speeding up the proficiency testing program. The test schedule for the next six months which was published recently [REDACTED] '59) shows that tests are being offered much more frequently than

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in the past. Written test materials are being shortened and simplified without sacrificing standards or objectivity. And by spring we will be ready to supply tests to field stations for local administration. We have also established a systematic procedure, using machine records from the Office of Personnel, which places us in a position to identify for each component at Headquarters the names of its employees whose language proficiency claims have not been verified. This procedure can do much to speed up the verification of usable proficiencies and to improve the Agency's language inventory rosters.

c. A closer look, together with appropriate counseling, is being given applicants for the Voluntary Language Training Program who, because of low aptitude or other factors, appear to be marginal candidates. This should eliminate the more obvious misfits who have sometimes burdened the voluntary program in the past.

d. The Language and Area School is developing plans to expand its tutorial capability to meet those requirements which aren't heavy enough for or do not fit into regular class schedules, and particularly to take care of persons under non-official cover. It is our belief that LAS can or will be able to handle many of these tutorial requirements itself at less expense and with better results than we have been getting through private schools and tutors.

e. To create among CIA components a better understanding of the various kinds of language training available and the results which can be expected from them, members of LAS plan to visit regular meetings of component training officers. There they can give full explanations about specific features of the language program. LAS is also preparing a written guidance to help supervisors and operating officials plan individual language training programs for members of their units. The guidance contains a table showing the approximate number of hours of formal or tutorial instruction required to bring persons of the various aptitudes up to specified levels of proficiency in particular languages.

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3. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRESENT ACTION

Beyond the accomplishments cited in the preceding paragraph, I recommend the following additional actions be taken at this time:



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of these changes are rather fundamental in nature. Not all of them stem from recommendations by the Language Development Committee. However, they are the product of very careful study by either the Committee or my staff, or both, and I believe they should be approved.

b. Confirm the plan (discussed in the November - December OTR Bulletin) to modify the curriculum of the Voluntary Language Training Program so that elementary courses in French, German, Spanish and Italian will be phased out--except for students whose components request such training in preparation for present or projected assignments. Under this plan, and starting with the spring semester which begins 7 March 1960, classes will no longer be offered at the 101 level (the beginning level) in these four languages. In the following semester--the fall of 1960--classes will also be discontinued in the languages at the 102 level (the second stage of the elementary level). Thereafter--except for "sponsored" students--only intermediate and advanced courses would be offered in these four languages.

With respect to the enrollment of "sponsored" students in the voluntary program, I think we should affirm the general rule that necessary language training will be accomplished in the directed (on-duty) language program. Exceptions can, of course, be made when circumstances warrant.

The foregoing recommendations follow my conviction that the VLTP has been devoting an altogether disproportionate share of its resources and energy to teaching the

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common European languages, particularly to students who never attain a useful level of proficiency in them. As I reported to you 3 November, in the first two years of the VLTP here at Headquarters, of the 1,193 students who completed a trimester of study, 1,056 were in beginning or elementary courses (the 100 series). Only 113 completed intermediate courses and just 24 finished advanced courses. About two-thirds of these students were taking French, German, Spanish and Italian. The record looks somewhat better for this the third year of the VLTP, as you might expect. But I believe the time is here nevertheless when we should place the main emphasis of this program on the attainment of useful levels of proficiency in all the languages studied. And we should encourage new students to seek out those languages which the Agency most urgently needs.

4. Approval of the foregoing recommendations will strengthen our language program and resolve many minor problems that have troubled us. Moreover, action on these recommendations should help clear the way for later consideration of the broad policy objectives pointed up in my report to you last October. The long-range goals which that report sets for the Agency's language program are still the objectives we must strive for. Sometime this year I believe that we can complete our review and justifying analyses and then create the opportunity to press for Agency adoption of these policy objectives.

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MATTHEW BAIRD  
Director of Training

Attachment:  
Proposed Changes in [REDACTED]

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